

Still a Prince

This weekend, we will all have access to a very specific time machine. Not the kind that we typically use to go back and kill Hitler, or to release the Beatles' catalog one year before they did. This time machine has one setting, March 30, 1985.

From May 14 through May 17, [Prince & The Revolution: Live](#) will be made available to watch on YouTube. Prince's estate has unearthed this iconic performance, filmed in Syracuse in 1985, as a way to support the [COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund](#).

The recorded performance was one of 98 during that tour (my girlfriend was grounded for a week after attending the Dallas show), supporting the album and film, "Purple Rain." This was the record that sent Tipper Gore to the medicine cabinet, after purchasing it for her 11 year-old daughter and hearing [Darling Nikki](#) for the first time. This awkward moment led to the formation of the zealous Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), Parental Advisory [stickers](#) and a memorable [Senate hearing](#).

Sharing this concert to help raise funds is not an isolated bit of altruism for Prince's estate. After his untimely death in April 2016, the world began to learn of his remarkable commitment to philanthropy.

Activist Van Jones had a good deal to do with raising this awareness. He and Prince [had become friends](#) after Jones realized a \$50,000 check (for a green jobs project) that he had repeatedly refused to accept was from The Artist. "Just like he was a bandleader on the musical side, he was a bandleader on the social side," said Jones.

Prince tended to keep his better angels on the down-low. He became a Jehovah's Witness in 2001, but his reluctance to trumpet his financial good deeds was most likely a personal

preference-based upon his penchant for privacy. Upon learning that the [Louisville Free Public Library](#)—the first-ever facility designed specifically for African-Americans in 1905—was in financial trouble, he quietly sent them a [donation](#) for \$12,000 and requested it not be made public.

When Trayvon Martin was executed by a self-anointed vigilante in 2012, Prince was at it again, donating money [anonymously](#) to the Martin family via activist Al Sharpton. Prince was often focused on [renewable energy projects](#) and providing technical training to underprivileged areas. While talking with Jake Tapper, Van Jones recalled an [exchange](#) he had with Prince regarding the infamous hoodie: “After the Trayvon Martin verdict I was talking to Prince and he said, ‘You know, every time people see a young black man wearing a hoodie, they think, he’s a thug. But if they see a young white guy wearing a hoodie they think, oh that might be Mark Zuckerberg. That might be a dot-com billionaire.’”

“I said, ‘Well, yeah, Prince that’s true but that’s because of racism.’ And he said, ‘No, it’s because we have not produced enough black Mark Zuckerbergs. That’s on us. That’s on us. To deal with what we’re not doing to get our young people prepared to be a part of this new information economy.’”

Despite his many personal [peccadillos](#), Prince Rogers Nelson was unquestionably a musical genius. My generation’s Mozart. He quietly parlayed his own financial success towards the success of others who may [never know](#) he was the one to thank.

Visit Prince’s YouTube channel this weekend, enjoy the show and donate what you can. [Google](#) is offering to match \$2 for every \$1 donated, up to \$5,000,000. As of this writing, \$5,243,014 has been raised so far. By the way, I was mistaken—this time machine has two settings: 1985 and 1999.